

**ELICITING
COMPLAINT
INFORMATION**

The reporting person should be asked to be as specific as possible about the alleged abuse or neglect, indicating what was observed or heard that caused suspicion of abuse or neglect. To assist in determining the appropriateness of a complaint for investigation by CPS and to assess the seriousness of the situation, the following guidelines are suggested when discussing the situation with the reporting person.

- How, specifically, does the reporting person believe the child is at risk of harm (threatened harm) or has been harmed by abuse or neglect?
- What specifically occurred? Did the reporting person see or hear something? Does someone else have first-hand knowledge?
- What are the ages of the children? Are any children under 6 years old? These children are particularly vulnerable and care should be exercised in assessing such complaints.
- Is any child singled out for maltreatment?
- Is this a chronic or isolated instance? If chronic, how often does it occur: daily, weekly, yearly? When did incident occur last?
- Is a child in immediate physical danger?
- What is the reporting person's relationship to the family and household? What is the possible motivation for the complaint?
- Have the relationships between the reporting person and the household been friendly, difficult, strained, etc.?
- Has the reporting person spoken to the responsible person(s) about this matter and the concern expressed? Are, or have there recently been, other agencies involved with the household that might have information about the situation? These should be identified.

**REQUIRED CHECKS
FOR LICENSING
STATUS**

Inquiries must be made in an attempt to verify the licensing status of persons associated with the complaint. These inquiries are to be supported by SWSS clearances conducted by Centralized Intake (CI) to determine if a licensed provider is identified as a member of the CPS complaint.

The reporting person must be asked if anyone affiliated with the case is a licensed foster care provider, licensed day care provider or a relative provider. A SWSS Soundex check must be completed for all child(ren) listed on the complaint. Intake staff will document if any of the children in the home are listed within SWSS as foster children.

These clearances must be documented in the complaint source comment section in SWSS.

Allegations

When allegations are entered in SWSS CPS, proofread to ensure that the identity of the reporting person is not revealed. Once a determination is made to assign, transfer, or reject the complaint, the allegations cannot be changed.

When selecting allegations under the Allegations tab in SWSS CPS, select at least one yellow-highlighted abuse/neglect type in the Abuse/Neglect Code tab. Also select any of the unhighlighted factors if the reporting person indicates the presence of those factors in the home (for example, domestic violence, drug residence, drug-exposed infant, etc.).

Death of a Child

Document that the complaint is regarding a child death by checking the Child Fatality box on the Allegations tab and entering the date of death in the Case Member tab of SWSS CPS; see PSM 712-6, CPS Intake-Special Cases, Death Of A Child section.

**PRELIMINARY
INVESTIGATION**

When information received from the reporting person during intake is not sufficient to reach a decision regarding whether or not to assign the complaint for field investigation and to assign a priority

response, CPS must conduct a preliminary investigation. A preliminary investigation must begin immediately upon conclusion of the intake contact. Within 24 hours of receipt of the complaint, a decision must be made to accept and assign for CPS field investigation, to transfer to another unit that has jurisdiction to investigate (for example, the prosecuting attorney and/or law enforcement, American Indian Tribal Unit, another state, Bureau of Child and Adult Licensing, etc.) or to reject the complaint.

Activities which may be part of a preliminary investigation include the following:

- A. Complete a **statewide** SWSS CPS Soundex search on all persons listed on the complaint. Determine the history and credibility of former complaints. **Note:** SWSS CPS Soundex searches can be completed on a specific county. To be considered a statewide search, the Soundex search must be completed statewide by selecting "0 Non-spec. County" in SWSS CPS.
- B. Complete a central registry inquiry to identify past perpetrators. The central registry clearance must be completed on all persons listed on the complaint who are age 18 or older.
- C. Complete a LEIN check on all persons potentially responsible for the child's health and welfare for all sexual abuse, physical abuse, substance abuse (including methamphetamine exposure) and/or domestic violence allegations.
- D. Conduct or make contact with any collateral contacts who have direct knowledge relevant to the issues in the complaint in order to assess the child's safety. This can include: a neighbor, pastor, day care provider, school, medical facility, etc.
- E. Consult with DHS professional staff (for example, CPS, FIS, foster care, etc.) to clarify relevant issues in the complaint.

Document all of the steps of the preliminary investigation that were completed in the Update/View Preliminary Investigation box in the Ready for Action tab of the Intake module in SWSS CPS.

Contacts at Intake

Contacts made during intake must be entered into SWSS CPS in the Social Work Contacts module.

Note: If any field contacts are made, the complaint must be assigned for field investigation.

MULTIPLE COMPLAINTS

When the current complaint is at least the third CPS complaint on a family **and** the complaint includes a child age 3 or under, CPS must conduct a preliminary investigation covering, at a minimum, steps (A-C) above. Additional steps, including but not limited to steps D and E, should be completed when necessary to assist the department in making appropriate decisions regarding assignment.

Note: When the information received during the current complaint is enough to determine the complaint should be assigned for investigation, a preliminary investigation does not need to be completed. See PSM 713-09, Completion of Investigation, Multiple Complaints section for requirements when these complaints are assigned for field investigation.

If there is already an assigned investigation or an open case, a copy of the rejected complaint must be forwarded to the assigned worker for his/her information and any necessary follow-up regarding the allegations; see PSM 712-8, CPS Intake Completion.